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BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONY
No. 4, IN
B-FLAT

Op. 60

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PIERRE
MONTEUX
CONDUCTOR

SCHUMANN

SYMPHONY
No. 4, IN
D MINOR

Op. 120

LONG  PLAY

Beethoven SYMPHONY No. 4, IN B-FLAT, Op. 60 Schumann SYMPHONY No. 4, IN D MINOR, Op. 120

SIDE 1

Symphony No. 4, in B-Flat, Op. 60 (Beethoven)

Biographers and annotators cannot be blamed for waxing lyrical over this symphony. Few can resist reading a romance in its pages. A "symphony of love" one has holdily dubbed it. Others, with Beethoven's famous undated and unaddressed letter to the "Immortal Beloved" in mind, regard the Fourth as a similar testament of passion.

Actually, it is pure supposition to attribute the Fourth to romantic pressure at all. What is beyond question is that the spring and summer of 1806, when the symphony was presumably written, were one of the happiest and sweetest breathing spells in Beethoven's stormy career. The spring had been almost purely a holiday, spent in Hungary on the estate of Count Brunnsvik. There he had revelled in the beautiful natural surroundings of the place and courted the Count's sister Theresa. And, there, in May, he apparently became engaged to her. Anyway, we have Theresa's word for it. As customary in Beethoven's love life, the affair came to nothing.

The assumed circumstances of Beethoven's stay on the Brunnsvik estate at Marienvar have led the Theresa theorists to date the mysterious epistle to the "Immortal Beloved" as of that enchanted spring. Toward the summer, Beethoven's visit with the Brunnsviks came to an end. He had accepted an invitation to spend the summer and autumn with his friend and patron Prince Lichnowsky at the Castle Gräz in Silesia. In October, he was back in Vienna. Accompanying him to the Austrian capital were the G major Piano Concerto, the *Rasoumovsky Quartet*, Op. 39, and the C minor Variations. Also, the *Symphony in B-flat major*, No. 4, Op. 60, with its romantic confidences, if any.

The dedication of the *Symphony* to a Count Franz von Oppersdorf ties in with Beethoven's sojourn at the Castle Gräz. One day Beethoven and Prince Lichnowsky visited the Count, who occupied a castle in nearby Oberglöck. Beethoven's Second *Symphony* was among the numbers played by the Count's excellent private orchestra. Beethoven was naturally delighted. Later, when the Count commissioned him to write a symphony, he accepted eagerly. Beethoven pocketed the advanced five hundred florins.

He intended the great C minor *Symphony* for the Count. The contract included six months' performing rights. But Beethoven changed his mind, disposed other-

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wise of the Fifth *Symphony*, apologized humbly to his titled client, and sent along the Fourth instead. Hence the dedication. The Count, quite humanly, was anything but mollified. He said nothing, but no further commissions came from Oberglöck. Doubtless what nettled Count Oppersdorf most was the fact that the Fourth, when delivered, had already been sold and premiered. The first performance had occurred at a special subscription concert organized for Beethoven's benefit and held at the house of another of Beethoven's titled clients, Prince Lobkowitz, in March, 1807.

Robert Schumann's famous remark about the Fourth *Symphony*—"a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants"—was, of course, no allusion to either of the named Austrian countesses. Whether Schumann, in his own romantic and buoyant way, regarded it in any strict sense as a "symphony of love" is not known. What he sought to emphasize was the striking contrast between the softer moods of the Fourth and the epic sweep of the Third and Fifth.

SIDE 2

Symphony No. 4, in D Minor, Op. 120 (Schumann)

Through revision and delayed publication, Schumann's *D minor* is listed as *Symphony No. 4*. Actually it was Schumann's second. Written and premiered in 1841, the work remained in manuscript for ten years. Disfavored with it, largely because of the instrumentation, Schumann refused to have it published. Then in December, 1851, he took up the manuscript again. Drastic revision resulted. By March, 1853, the *Symphony* was ready for a second premiere. Publication followed that December.

But meanwhile Schumann had written and published the symphonies in C and E-flat. Thus, the *D minor Symphony* is No. 4 only in point of revision and date of publication.

December 6, 1841, was the date of the *D minor*'s premiere at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. Featured on the program, however, was Liszt's *Hesameren* for two pianos, with the Schumanns appearing as soloists. The now forgotten work caused a sensation, utterly eclipsing the new *Symphony*. Clara writes grudgingly of the Liszt novelty: "It made a furor, as far as the audience was concerned, and we were obliged to repeat a part of it." The couple went home thoroughly unhappy that night. Robert kept reminding Clara of her bad playing in the *Hesameren*, and Clara could not get over Ferdinand David's poor conducting of the *Symphony*. For ten long years no more was heard of the *D minor*. Incidentally, the work was called a "Symphonische Phantasie" in this early form.

When the *Symphony* again saw the light in its altered version, Schumann himself conducted from manuscript. The concert occurred on March 3, 1853, in Düsseldorf. Included, too, were excerpts from a Schumann Mass, and of course Clara Schumann was on hand to play the solo part of a Beethoven Concerto. The unbroken plan of the symphony was conveyed in the listing: "Einleitung (Introduction), Allegro, Romanze, Scherzo, and Finale in einem Satz (in one movement)." Schumann insisted that there be no pauses between movements. Mendelssohn was equally firm about having the Scotch *Symphony* played without interruption. The linking up of movements through certain recurring themes in part accounts for Schumann's wish to have it performed "without pause." By so relating the movements, Schumann to some extent foreshadowed the later cyclic form of symphony, in which reiterated themes are used to knit the work together.

Schumann dedicated the revised symphony to the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, the inscription on the manuscript reading: "When the first tones of this symphony were awakened, Joseph Joachim was still a little fellow (ten years old); since then the symphony and still more the boy have grown bigger, wherever I dedicate it to him, although only in private. Düsseldorf, December 23, 1853. Robert Schumann."

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